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transaction

An activity or request. Orders, purchases, changes, additions and deletions are typical business transactions stored in the computer. Transactions update one or more master files and serve as both an audit trail and history for future analyses. Ad hoc queries are a type of transaction as well, but are usually just acted upon and not saved. Transaction volume is a major factor in figuring computer system size and speed.

Keeping Transactions in Sync

A major problem in a transaction processing system is ensuring that all master files are updated before the transaction is considered completely processed. For example, if two files must be updated, but a system failure occurs after the first one, but before the second one, the software must be able to roll back the first update and start over later. In a distributed environment, this is called "two-phase commit." See [transaction file](#).

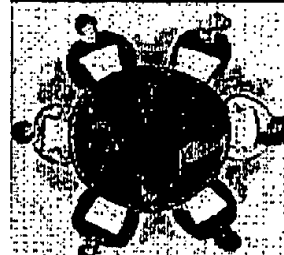
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transaction processing

Updating the appropriate database records as soon as a transaction (order, payment, etc.) is entered into the computer. It may also imply that confirmations are sent at the same time.

Transaction processing systems are the backbone of an organization because they update constantly. At any given moment, someone may need an inventory balance, an account balance or the total current value of a financial portfolio. Also called "online transaction processing" (OLTP), the OLTP market is a demanding one, often requiring 24x7 operation and the most reliable computers and networks.

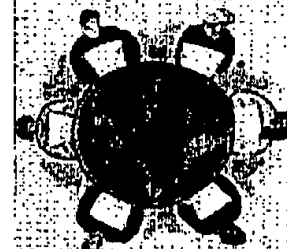
A manual example of transaction processing would be that every time you purchased an item, you added the amount paid to a running total. Contrast with "batch processing," which means that you save all receipts in a drawer and add them up at the end of the year for taxes. See [two-phase commit](#), [mission critical](#), [industrial strength](#) and [fault tolerant](#).

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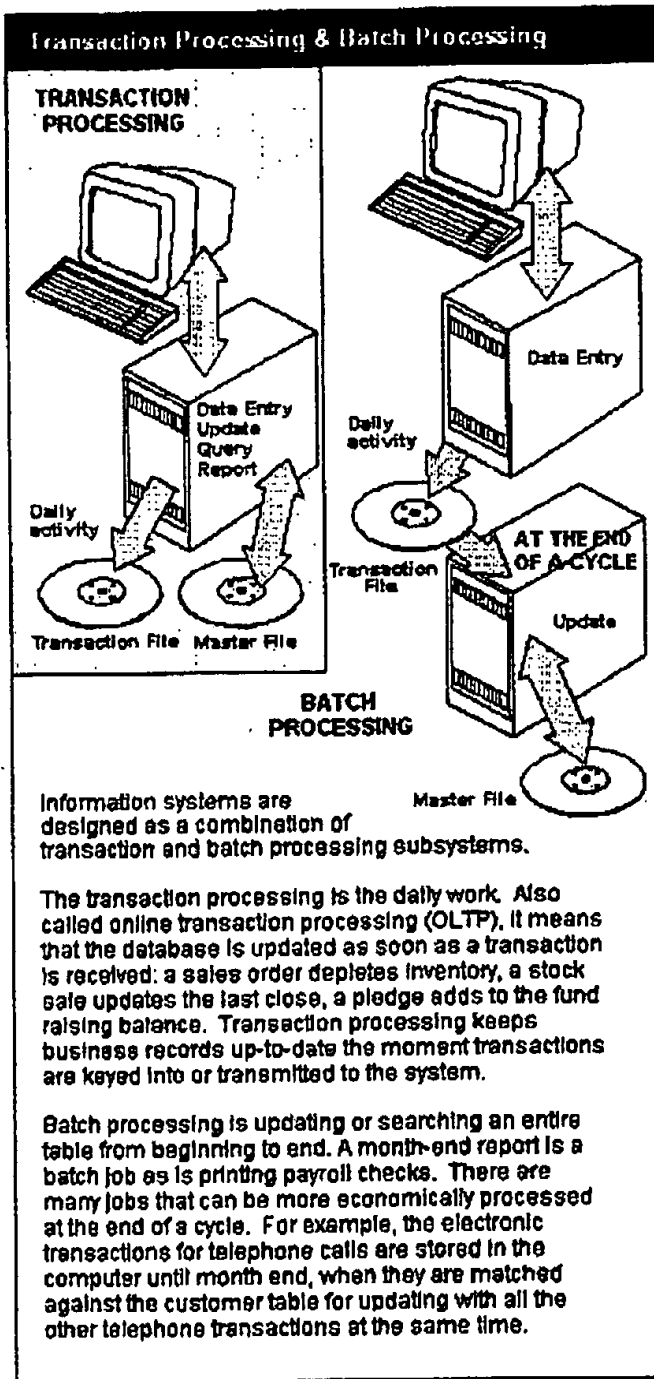
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